

Montana Office of Vital Records Newsletter

This is the first in a new series of quarterly Newsletters from the Office of the Registrar of the Montana Office of Vital Records. We will use these Newsletters to inform you, our partners in vital registration, about how we use the data you send us. We will include tips and educational features to make your work easier. We will recognize individuals and institutions who do exemplary work in prompt and accurate filing. Finally, as a Quality Improvement initiative, we will include a Performance Score Card for your institution or practice to help you assess your own areas of strength and weakness. These Performance Score Cards will not be shared with any other institutions or individuals.

Birth Certification Performance Score Cards

The first Performance Score Cards will focus on birth certification. There are 37 birthing hospitals and two free-standing birthing centers in Montana at this time. Each will receive a 2013 Annual Summary to serve as a baseline for their birth certification performance. Along with future Newsletters, they will receive Score Cards about the quarter just finished so they can track their progress. We hope certifiers and hospital administrators will use the Score Cards in the spirit which they are intended, to help identify areas for improvement. The staff of the Office of Vital Records is available to help with questions, clarification, or training. We anticipate beginning Death Certification Performance Score Cards for all death certifiers next year.

Birth and death certificates are primarily legal documents. For the individual, birth registration documents the fact of birth, providing proof of citizenship and age. Death registration documents the fact of death and facilitates the transfer of some rights and responsibilities to the survivors of a decedent. For states and the nation, birth and death registration contribute to monitoring population growth and distribution, which have political and economic implications. Birth and death certificates also contain items that provide valuable information to serve a growing variety of public health functions.

Every item on birth and death certificates is important, either to the individuals documented by the certificates and their families; or for public health officials who use the data from vital certificates for research, planning, and policy making. Everyone who has a responsibility for completing a birth or death certificate plays a critical role in ensuring the completeness and accuracy of vital records data.

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Meet the Registrar's Staff



Left to right: Kathy Farrar, Data Acquisition Specialist; Julie Wilhelm, Corrections Clerk; Donna Dobler, Issuance Clerk; Sharon Breidenbach, Lead Issuance Clerk; Karin Ferlicka, State Registrar, Gilbert Silva, Issuance Clerk; Lisa Spencer, Adoption Clerk; Dean Vig, Records Administration Supervisor, and Kathy Thompson, Data Acquisition Supervisor.

The Office of Vital Records operates Montana's Vital Statistics Information Management System (VSIMS). The Office maintains vital event registration and reporting in all Montana counties, provides record services to individuals regarding birth, death, fetal death, marriage, divorce, and paternity. The Office also provides record services and statistics to State, Federal, and County government agencies for the administrative use of vital records.

The Data Acquisition section is responsible for the registration of all vital events that occur in Montana.

The Vital Records Administration section is responsible for the issuance and correction of birth, death, and fetal death events.

Help is always a phone call away:

Questions about registering births, deaths, and fetal deaths

Kathy Thompson, Data Acquisition Supervisor	(406) 444-0692
Kathy Farrar, Data Acquisition Specialist	(406) 444-1986

Questions about issuance, correction, paternity, and adoption

Dean Vig, Vital Records Administration Supervisor	(406) 444-5249
Sharon Breidenbach, Issuance Lead, including paternity	(406) 444-4252
Lisa Spencer, Adoption and Correction Lead	(406) 444-4226

Technical Assistance Documentation Is Available On-Line

If your institution does not have a current Preparer's Handbook, an on-line copy can be located at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/forms>



Birth Registration Gold Star for Excellence Recipients

The following facilities received birth registration Gold Stars for Excellence for the baseline year of 2013. More than 85% of their births were registered within 10 days, above the state average performance for the year.

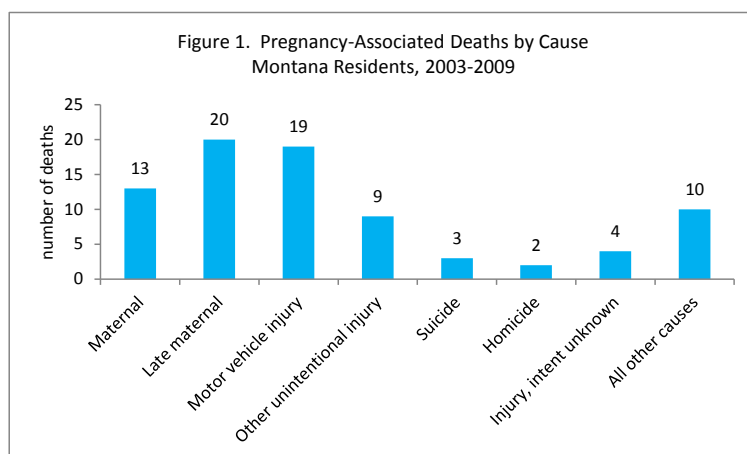


Anaconda Community Hospital
 Barrett Hospital and Healthcare
 Big Horn County Memorial Hospital
 Billings Deaconess Medical Center
 Birth Center of Missoula
 Central Montana Hospital
 Family Birth Center
 Frances Mahon Deaconess Hospital
 Great Falls Benefis Health Care
 Kalispell Regional Medical Center

Marcus Daily Memorial Hospital
 Missoula Community Medical Center
 North Valley Hospital
 Northern Montana Hospital
 Pondera Medical Center
 St. James Healthcare
 St. John's Lutheran Hospital
 St. Joseph Hospital
 Sidney Health Center

Pregnancy-Associated Mortality Ascertained from Death Certificates

The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, collaborators in the Maternal Mortality Study Group, offer two broad definitions of deaths associated with pregnancy: **Pregnancy-related death** (while pregnant or within one year from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management, but excluding accidental or incidental causes) and **pregnancy-associated death** (while pregnant or within one year, irrespective of cause).



The Montana Office of Vital Records implemented a pregnancy checkbox in its 2003 revision of the death certificate (Pregnant at time of death, Pregnant within 42 days of death, Pregnant within 43 to 365 days of death). We searched mortality files from 2003 through 2009 for deaths in which current or recent pregnancy was indicated by the checkboxes. We also matched death certificates of female decedents to certificates of births occurring within one year of the date of

death, and ascertained a few more deaths not found by the checkboxes. We found 80 deaths of Montana-resident women who fit the broadest classification of pregnancy-associated death (Figure 1). Only 33 of the cases were pregnancy-related. An additional 28 deaths were caused by unintentional injuries, notably 19 by motor vehicle crashes.

The large number of pregnancy-associated deaths caused by motor vehicle crashes is startling. While these injury deaths cannot be attributed to pregnancy in any strict sense, deaths from motor vehicle crashes were four times more common among pregnant or recently pregnant women than among all other women of the same age range, and deaths from other kinds of unintentional injury were twice as common among pregnant or recently pregnant women (Figure 2).

We were able to use the traffic accident checkbox on the death certificates to determine that all women who died in vehicle crashes while pregnant were passengers, whereas all women who died in vehicle crashes postpartum were drivers. This suggests an explanatory hypothesis: new mothers may be driving while fatigued or while distracted by an infant in the vehicle with them, or both. This emphasizes

the public health applications of death certificate data to assist in developing potentially life-saving educational campaigns or prevention programs directed at new mothers.

